



Refugees At Home Coronavirus Policy.

Last Updated 19.07.2021

Coronavirus is a viral infection which causes symptoms similar to 'flu. Current advice suggests that infection with the virus leads to a mild to moderate illness for the majority of people. A small proportion of the population is at risk of becoming more seriously unwell. Those who are thought to be more vulnerable include the elderly and those with underlying health conditions as well as those from BAME communities and pregnant women.

Coronavirus and concerns about the impact on the work of Refugees At Home (RAH).

Refugees at Home have been adapting over the last 18 months to ensure as much as we can that placements can continue to be made safely.

This policy outlines the general principles which will form our response to this uncertain and ever changing situation. **We will be guided by the official advice provided by the NHS and the Government, including devolved decisions from the four nations. This means there will be different approaches in each area.**

Employees and volunteers **cannot give advice** about the Coronavirus: hosts, guests, volunteers, referrers and home visitors will be asked to consult official NHS and Government advice when thinking through their own responses to possible exposure of the virus or the development of symptoms.

There is now different advice in different parts of the UK. This advice and these restrictions have been put in place by the authorities as a response to varying levels of severity. However, across the whole of the UK if anyone has symptoms or has been in contact with someone who has symptoms then they and their household should self isolate at home.

What is a household?

For the purposes of hosting, Refugees At Home is working on the premise that a guest is part of a household. If a guest who is currently hosted needs to move, we will review our ability to continue support depending on the specific level of risk in the area and the hosts we have available. Use of public transport will be discouraged where possible.

It has been confirmed that people are able to stay away overnight from 'home' during a lockdown if they are homeless, seeking asylum, a vulnerable person seeking refuge or if escaping harm. Details can be found [here](#).

Tier System

A tiered system was adopted to help people understand the level of risk in any given area. This is no longer in operation in England or Northern Ireland although a 5 Tier system remains in Scotland and a 4 Tier system in Wales (details below).

Due to new variants some areas in Scotland may have 'Do Not Travel' guidance. This does not constitute a lockdown but it means Refugees at Home will try to avoid moving guests unless absolutely necessary.

Easing out of Lockdown - from 19th July

England -

From the 19th July, there will be no legal obligation to practice social distancing or wear face masks. There will no longer be restrictions on the number of people who can meet in a group, indoors or outdoors.

Refugees at Home will still be encouraging guests and hosts to practice social distancing and the wearing of face masks. Additional rules may be imposed on a placement by a host and Refugees at Home will ask that they are followed so long as they are reasonable.

Placements will go ahead where both host and guest are fully happy with any restrictions required for that placement.

Key differences between levels in Scotland

LEVEL 0 - Nearly normal

Indoor meetings allowed – maximum eight people from three households

Fifteen people from five households can meet outdoors

LEVEL 1 - Medium

Six people from two households can meet indoors and outdoors

LEVEL 2 - High

No indoor meeting with other households

Six people from two households can meet outdoors and in hospitality settings

Pubs permitted to sell alcohol indoors only with a main meal - and time restrictions may apply

LEVEL 3 - Very High

Alcohol sales not permitted indoors or outdoors

Restaurants may be able to remain open under strict conditions

LEVEL 4 - Lockdown

Closer to a full lockdown of the type the UK went into at the end of March, with non-essential shops being forced to close

Some outdoor meeting still allowed

Schools will stay open

Scotland

There are [5 tiers](#) in the Scottish system. Tier 5 is equivalent to complete lockdown.

Refugees at Home will continue to make placements for those who find themselves street homeless or in unstable accommodation.

Public transport should be avoided. We ask that hosts let us know of any house rules that they might have specific to Coronavirus - we will support these rules where they are reasonable and practical.

If you develop symptoms you should self isolate and book a test. If you have been in recent contact with a guest, host or home visitor you should contact Refugees At Home as soon as possible.

All of Scotland will move to level 0 from 19th July. Face masks will still be mandatory

Wales

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A 4 Tier system is in place in Wales. The current restrictions relating to households is detailed below.

Six people from six households can now meet inside (this number does not include children aged 11 and under or carers from these households).

There is no limit on people meeting outdoors.

The three simple rules - Wash hands regularly, wear a face covering in enclosed spaces and stay at least 2 metres apart (1 metre if wearing a face covering).

If you have formed an extended household (bubble) you can meet indoors with up to 6 people from that extended household.

Full details can be found [here](#)

Northern Ireland

Up to 15 people, from no more than 3 households, can meet up outdoors. Social distancing must be maintained.

Up to six people from two households can meet up indoors.

Face masks and social distancing is still compulsory in Northern Ireland. Full details can be found [here](#).

The Rule of Six

Different Tiers are detailed below explaining where the rule of 6 applies. The rule of 6 can be an important one to explain to guests so if you have any questions or concerns about this please let the placement team know.

Nation	Rule of 6 rules
England	The rule of six will be removed from the 19th July.
Scotland	You can meet with no more than 8 people indoors in Scotland. This excludes children under the age of 12.

Wales	You can meet with no more than 6 people indoors in Wales and these 6 people must only come from 2 households. This number excludes those under the age of 11 and carers.
Northern Ireland	You can meet with no more than 6 people outdoors in Northern Ireland and these 6 people must only come from 2 households. This excludes children under the age of 12. This number expands to 15 for private gardens.

Any further advice issued by the Government that is not detailed above should be followed.

Vaccines and Testing

We are hopeful that as the vaccine roll out increases that our guests may become eligible for a vaccine. While our guests should be eligible, they will be offered the vaccine based on the same priority lists as everyone else.

Some of our hosts have enquired about a guest having a test before starting a placement. This might be possible on occasion however it will depend on the individual referrer and their capacity to organise this.

It is reasonable to ask for a test to be done before a guest moves to your home. We will try to organise this with the referrer where possible. If you wish for regular tests to be taken during the placement please let us know. Tests for people without symptoms can be ordered [here](#) .

If a test is carried out prior to someone moving into a placement, we cannot guarantee that they will not come into contact with the virus before the move takes place.

We fully understand and respect your wishes if you request that a test is done, however if a guest is at risk of imminent street homelessness we may have to ask another host. We will however make a note of your request and be sure to approach you with another guest just as soon as we can. Testing will also be conditional on the consent of our guests and we respect their right to refuse a test if they wish, which they may do for various reasons.

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Symptoms of Coronavirus

As Coronavirus is a relatively new virus we are still learning about it and there are new strains emerging. Some people may develop all or some of the symptoms and others may not develop any at all.

The main symptoms are -

- A new, continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss or change to your sense of taste or smell

You may also experience

- Shortness of breath
- Extreme fatigue

New variants are reporting symptoms of headaches and runny nose but this is early information.

Advice can be found on the [NHS website](#)

Hosting

We are open to new referrals and are working with our trusted referral partners to ensure guests fully understand the importance of continued measures.

Where possible we will try to find move on options for our guests if they need to leave hosting. It is possible that it will become more difficult to find suitable hosts for our guests to move on to. We will always do all that we can to help and will keep hosts and referrers informed of any changes to continued hosting.

We are asking all hosts and guests questions specific to Coronavirus, symptoms and contacts in the lead up to placements.

As vaccine rates increase, we are no longer asking guests to self isolate when they move into a placement. However, if anyone in the household develops symptoms they should follow normal self isolation rules. If you would still like a period of self isolation for a placement in your home please do speak with the RAH team.

For current placements, hosts, guests and referrers will be asked to update RAH as soon as possible if they or anything they have been in close contact with develops symptoms.

House Rules

In addition to the required social distancing and hygiene rules, some hosts may have individual house rules, which we will ask guests to respect, so long as they are reasonable.

Guests should not move between their host's home and friends, unless this is something their current host is happy with.

We will ask referrers to ensure that guests are aware of the current policy advice and restrictions on movement. If a guest will not abide by these rules we will end the placement and will not be able to offer further hosting.

If a guest feels uncomfortable in their placement and is worried that their host is not practicing social distancing, we ask that they let their referrers know. We will try and find an alternative placement but we cannot guarantee this.

We **ALWAYS** depend on our referrers to ask appropriate questions of guests and inform us of any health conditions. We rely on this more than ever. We are asking referrers to talk to their guests about the virus, using a translator if necessary. Information about a guests health is shared with hosts.

If someone develops symptoms -

If a host or guest develops Coronavirus or symptoms of Coronavirus, and either the host or guest asks for the placement to end, we will do all that we can to assist but must advise that **members of a household should self isolate together on the same premises.**

We will not be able to offer further placements until the guest has recovered and is no longer contagious. If we are to offer further placements after this time, the nature of how the original placement ended will be shared with prospective hosts.

If a host asks that a placement ends because of concerns surrounding the Coronavirus but not because any one has the virus, we will do all we can to find a new placement. However this cannot be guaranteed.

Home Visits

Home visits were temporarily virtual and while restrictions have eased we do still encourage virtual home visits.

A Home Visitor may ask to make a visit in person but only if both the host and home visitor feel comfortable with that arrangement. No pressure should be placed on either party to do face to face visits/

This will also be driven by the restrictions in each area. We recognise the importance of face to face contact when doing a home visit however continued social distancing is important.

Where a virtual home visit is organised, we will ask that home visitors visit in person in the future - when it is safe to do so and our policy allows for it.

Any questions that the home visitor is unsure about should be relayed back to the placement team so we can provide consistent answers for our hosts and home visitors.



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Employees and Volunteers

Much of the work involved in Refugees At Home is undertaken remotely so there is limited face to face contact between volunteers, guests, hosts, referrers and others.

Members of the placement team will work from home and additional support will be given by the Executive Director and Trustee Operations Group.

The Placement team and volunteer team can seek advice from the Executive Director and Trustee Operations Group should they have concerns or questions about how to deal with this situation